

REMARKS

Claims 1 to 23, 25 to 44, 46, 49 to 53 and 55 to 90 are in the application, with Claims 1, 25, 46, 50, 51, 55, 56 and 70 being the independent claims. Claims 25 to 44 and 70 to 90 have been withdrawn from consideration pursuant to a restriction requirement. Claims 3, 9, 10, 31, 46 and 70 have been amended herein. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended to attend to formal matters.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that Claims 1 to 23, 46, 49 to 53 and 55 to 69 have been allowed. The amendments to Claims 3, 9, 10 and 46 are not believed to affect the allowability of these claims. Accordingly, Claims 1 to 23, 26, 49 to 53 and 55 are believed to remain in condition for allowance.

Claim 54, which was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,103,138 (Kondo), has been cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter presented therein, and without conceding the correctness of the rejection.

With respect to non-elected method Claims 25 to 44 and 70 to 90, Applicants respectfully submit that they are entitled to rejoinder of these claims pursuant to MPEP § 821.04, since Claims 25 to 44 contain all of the features of allowable Claim 1, and since Claims 70 to 90 contain all of the features of allowable Claim 46. As set forth at MPEP § 821.04:

However, if applicant elects claims to the product and a product claim is subsequently found allowable, withdrawn process claims which depend from or otherwise include all the limitations of the allowable product claim will be rejoined.

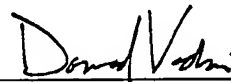
Accordingly, rejoinder of non-elected method Claims 25 to 44 and 70 to 90 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action indicates that the documents cited in the Information Disclosure Statement filed September 18, 2002, have been considered by the Examiner. However, Applicants have not yet received an initialled copy of the Form PTO-1449 that accompanied this Information Disclosure Statement. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner return an initialled copy of the Form PTO-1449. A copy of the Form PTO-1449 is enclosed, for the Examiner's convenience.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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